

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT IN ADVERTISING

Master Student Vlad Roșca
Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest

Abstract:

Being an individual sport, tennis often deals with a specific category of sponsoring: the endorsement. Tennis players and business organizations seek each other in order to sign partnerships from which both parties hope to win. Endorsements are among the most profitable income sources for professional athletes. By acting as ambassadors for their sponsors and by ceding them the image usage rights, tennis players earn a lot. But, through the image association with the athlete, the sponsor also wins, by adding value to his image capital. This paper researches the particularities of tennis endorsements using the case of Roger Federer, one of the best tennis players in history and one of the best business partners in the world of sports for sponsoring companies. Thanks to his success, Federer reached a level where not less than ten partners sponsor him yearly. The most interesting of these partnerships are presented in this paper.

Keywords: celebrity endorsement, sponsoring, sports marketing, tennis

Introduction

Being part of sponsoring, celebrity endorsement is often used in professional sport, by using the image of the athlete. In tennis, where athletes are individuals, not teams or clubs, endorsement is the main sponsoring possibility of a player. On the one hand side, business organizations search athletes with whom to associate their image, in order to raise their own image and brand awareness, and, finally, the selling of their products or services. On the other hand side, tennis players also seek sponsors, in order to grow their income. Next to the prizes offered by organizers for participating in their competitions, tennis players earn money from various endorsement contracts. Many say professional players earn maybe too much from such sponsoring deals, but it has to be known that the money the athletes receive doesn't remain entirely to them. Even tennis stars such as today's Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal or Novak Djokovic have to pay their trainers and their training sessions, or their transport and

accommodation to different tournaments worldwide. Moreover, not to mention the less performant players, who aren't in the top, and who find it more difficult to earn money and to cover their costs. Sponsoring deals and money come with performance. The more performant an athlete, the higher his/hers attractiveness for sponsors. But also, the more financial power the athlete has, the easier it will be for him to obtain sporting success. Because, next to money, endorsement contracts mean also relations in business, entertainment and sport, and these are a boosting factor for the success of the athlete.

Fullerton presents endorsement as a „payment to a spokesperson who will recommend and encourage the purchase of a marketer's product” (Fullerton, 2007, p. 212). Recommendation occurs spoken or unspoken. Spoken recommendation happens, mostly, in advertising spots, while the recommendation on the tennis field is unspoken and it happens through wearing the logo of the sponsor on the sporting equipment. The use of

tennis players as brand endorsers is favoured by the fact that these athletes are celebrities who, throughout others, have a large presence in mass-media. By wearing and promoting the brand of the sponsor, tennis players contribute to the mass publicum recognition of the latter one.

Born August 8, 1981, in Basel, Roger Federer is one of the best tennis players in history. After turning pro in 1998, the Swiss won sixteen Grand Slam titles, more than fifty tournaments and an Olympic gold medal in Beijing 2008. His succes on the court made him one of the most demanded athletes for endorsement partnerships. In may 2010, Federer had ten sponsoring or endorsement contracts, with the following companies: Credit Suisse, Gillette, Jura, Lindt, Mercedes-Benz, Nationale Suisse, Netjets, Nike, Rolex, and Wilson.

Possible endorsement contracts in tennis

Augustine-Schlossinger identifies three categories of endorsement contracts (Augustine-Schlossinger, 2003): headgear and clothing endorsement, hard goods endorsement and non-marking sponsorships. Often, in tennis, endorsement deals are a combination of two or of all these categories. Also, it frequently happens that two or more sponsors of a tennis player unite their forces in the endorsement or in advertising campaigns in which the athlete acts. In the following, „technical sponsoring” will be introduced into the paper, in order to facilitate the presentation of Federer’s case study. So, next to the three endorsement types, the paper will also analyse the technical sponsoring as being an option for the tennis player to attract new business partners.

A differentiation must be made between headger, clothing and hard goods endorsements and technical sponsoring. In a technical sponsoring, a sports goods manufacturer helps the

athlete with the equipment or clothing he needs in order to perform. For example, Nike provides the T-shirt, the short pants and the sneakers Roger Federer uses on the court. Endorsement means:

- that an organization buys advertising space on these products and uses it with the aim of raising its brand awarness and sellings or
- that the technical sponsor uses the sponsored athlete for non-marking sponsorships, which are a type of endorsement.

In november 2001, Roger Federer – ranked thirteenth in the world at that time - entered the court for the final of the Basel tournament against Tim Henman carying a Wilson termobag on his right shoulder, a Nike sports bag on his left shoulder and wearing a full Nike sports gear, including a bandana. Eight years later, in the Wimbledon tournament, tennis fans saw Federer wearing a white gear with golden strips and with an „RF” logo on it. The „RF” were the initials of Roger Federer and were a result of Federer’s sponsoring partnership with Nike. Identifying a market opportunity, Nike and Federer took the decision to launch an own, branded, gear collection. The sporting evolution Federer has made in eight years, from the thirteenth rank in the ATP tour to number one in the world, has raised the image awarness of the swiss, making him attractrive for sponsors and endorsers and, more importnat, has transformed him into a business partner who promises a win-win situation, with gains both for the sponsor and for Federer.

Endorsement in tennis can be analyzed from two points of view. One of them belongs to the sponsor, who does marketing through sport, the other one to the professional player, who does marketing for sport. Many authors differentiate between marketing through sport and marketing for sport (Constantinescu, 2009; Oprişan, 2002). In marketing through sport,

organizations use the image of the tennis player with the aim to benefit from a positive image transfer, and increase their brand awareness and product sellings. In marketing for sport, the athletes use marketing in order to raise their incomes, as well as their sporting success chances, thanks to a better use of the market opportunities.

In the following lines, the technical sponsoring and the three types of endorsement will be theoretically presented:

1) Technical sponsoring. As previously seen, a technical sponsoring deal means that a sports goods manufacturer helps the athlete with the equipment or clothing the latter one needs in order to perform. For example, Nike sponsors Roger Federer with the clothing and accessories. The advantage for Nike is that the public and the clients perceive the company as being the official provider of a world star, rising the notoriety of the sponsor. If a low-ranked player still has to look for sponsors, a good placed player as Federer hasn't got to deal with this search, because the sponsors are the ones who wish to associate their image and products with the athlete, because, thanks to his achievements, he brings them added value.

2) Endorsement derived from the technical sponsoring.

When wearing clothes and accessories with the Nike logo on them on the court in tournaments all around the world, Roger Federer helps the American sport goods producer by presenting its products to the public. Not only tennis or sport fans can see Federer wearing the Nike gear, but also people not so interested in sports, because the Swiss tennis player is an icon that extends way over the boundaries of athletics and he attracts the interest of other consumer categories as well. But, next to the technical sponsoring deal, Nike also has endorsement deals with Federer. While sponsoring occurs „on the court” through the wearing of the sponsor's products, endorsement happens „off the court”, with the athlete being involved in marketing promotion activities for his technical sponsor. Not only does Roger Federer wear Nike clothing when performing in tennis tournaments, but he also advertises for his sponsor, in what Augustine-Schlossinger calls a „non-marking sponsorship” (Augustine-Schlossinger, 2003): The differentiation between technical sponsoring and endorsement can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
The differentiation between technical sponsoring and endorsement

Technical sponsoring	Endorsement
- on the court	- off the court
- brand awareness is risen through simply wearing the sponsor's products	- brand awareness is risen through marketing promotion instruments such as advertising or public relations

3) Headgear and clothing endorsement. Headgear endorsement is defined by Augustine-Schlossinger as „advertising on an athlete's helmet, headband or hat” (Augustine-Schlossinger, 2003, p. 2). The same principle applies to clothing endorsement, just that there isn't any headgear included, but just the clothing down the neck, like for example the t-

shirt. In such an endorsement, a sponsor buys the right to place his logo on the headgear or on the clothing of the tennis player, with the aims to obtain more visibility and to raise the brand awareness.

Delimitations to the other forms of endorsement must be made. First of all, headgear and clothing endorsement is different to the endorsement derived

from technical sponsoring, because a third party sponsor buys advertising space on the equipment, whereas at the technical sponsoring the logo of the sponsor appears on the clothing because it is his own product. In other words, a sponsor buys space on clothing pieces which already have the logo of the producer. Secondly, the difference to non-marking sponsorships is that, in the case of headgear and clothing advertising, the tennis player doesn't have to act outside the field, like for example in advertising or in PR activities, but only wears the piece of clothing which has the logo of the sponsor on it.

4) Non-marking sponsorships. Non-marking sponsorships are partnerships between sponsors and athletes in which „the sponsor uses the athlete's name, likeness, or appearance” (Augustine-Schlossinger, 2003, p. 2) to promote its brand, mainly through advertising and public relations activities, such as the employment of the athlete as a speaker in conferences or the organisation of autograph sessions with him. It is important to co-brand these non-marking activities, in other words to use both the image of the sponsor and of the athlete. Federer's sponsors can be classified as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories of endorsement used by Roger Federer in 2010

Category of endorsement	Sponsors
Technical sponsoring	Nike, Wilson, Rolex
Endorsement derived from technical sponsoring	Nike, Wilson, Rolex
Headgear and clothing endorsement	-
Non-marking sponsorship	Credit Suisse, Gillette, Jura, Lindt, Mercedes-Benz, Nationale Suisse, NetJets

As can be seen in Table 2, Roger Federer didn't endorse on headgear and clothing in 2010. No sponsor, excepting the technical sponsor, placed its logo on headgear or clothing accessories used by Federer on the court. On the other hand side, the Swiss tennis star appeared in many non-marking sponsorship campaigns, shooting advertising spots or prints for Credit Suisse, Gillette, Jura or NetJets.

Already in the introduction of this paper, Nike's example was used in order to present the technical sponsoring and the endorsement derived from technical sponsoring. Next, the cases of Credit Suisse, Gillette and Wilson will be used to exemplify the non-marking sponsorship and a further technical sponsoring.

Roger Federer's non-marking sponsorship and technical sponsoring. The case studies of Credit Suisse, Gillette and Wilson

1) Credit Suisse

In November 2009, Credit Suisse – the most valuable Swiss bank on the market – and Roger Federer signed a ten year non-marking partnership. The bank bought the right to use Federer's image, promising to pay him around 20 million US Dollars during the ten years of partnership (www.telegraph.co.uk).

The attributes on which the endorsement is based are excellence and the Swiss roots of the partners. Coming from the same country, Federer and Credit Suisse share common national values to the clients, such as quality and seriosity. Moreover, both the tennis player and the bank stand for excellence. Clients perceive them as

pursuers of excellence: Credit Suisse because its outstanding financial results and its long banking tradition, and Federer for his numerous sporting achievements, including the more than 15 Grand Slams won.

The Credit Suisse endorsement is based on a global advertising campaign the bank launched under the slogan „One Credit Suisse”. Federer acts as a worldwide ambassador and takes part in promotional events the partner organises. Next to that, in order to mark the partnership, a TV advert was launched. The spot ends with the announcement: „One Roger Federer. Welcome to our team”.

2) Gillette

Among with soccer player Thierry Henry and golf-pro Tiger Woods, Roger Federer is the official endorser of Gillette, the safety razors producer established in 1895 in Boston, Massachusetts. Federer, Henry and Woods were chosen to be Gillette's endorsers because of their positive image as well on as off the sports field. Next to their sporting quality, Gillette also insists on the three athlete's good-looking. Because the Gillette razors are used by men who want to have a soft skin, the company entered a partnership with three celebrities that address to the target audience: they are successful, good-looking and promote a strong image of masculinity.

Under the slogan „The best a man can get”, Federer is part of the Gillette Champions campaign, consisting of TV, print and out-of-home advertising, as well as of various marketing events. For example, the weekly TV-show „Gillette World Sports” starts and ends with spots starring the three athletes. In the spot for the newly launched Gillette Fusion Power Phenom razor, Federer is presented as a „Tennis Phenom”. The sporting quality of Federer, presented through the word „Phenom”, used to characterise a person of phenomenal ability, is linked with the name of the

product, facilitating the image transfer between sponsor and endorser and guaranteeing quality: the Gillette razor is for a man what Roger Federer is on the tennis court, a champion. Through this advertising campaign, Gillette does marketing through sport, by using tennis as „promotion tool for the products/services of the company [...] which isn't active on the sports market” (Constantinescu, 2009, p. 79). As seen in the example of Gillette Fusion Power Phenom, companies mostly use marketing through sport for a better positioning of their newly launched products on the market and for selling newer or older products.

Next to advertising, as part of his deal with Gillette, Federer also took part in marketing events, like for example the „Boys To Men Event”, staged in Shanghai in 2008. Federer was participating in the Shanghai Masters and, while having free hours with no scheduled matches or trainings, he took part in a TV show. One thousand students attended the show live, in the backstage, other hundreds of thousand of people watching the event on TV. After answering an interview, Federer had to take part in a shaving contest with two guests. Winner was declared the fastest person to shave his beard.

3) Wilson

In March 2006, Federer and the sporting goods manufacturer Wilson signed a lifetime agreement (www.tenniswire.com). Already using Wilson since he was 10 years young, Federer became a client and partner of Wilson in 1998, when he turned pro, and the Chicago-based company insisted to become the official hard goods provider. The common brand management of Wilson and Roger Federer had such a great success – thanks to the sporting victories of the Swiss athlete –, that Wilson identified the opportunity of a lifelong partnership. Even after stopping playing, Federer will remain an icon in the world of sports.

His performances guarantee him a positive brand for the rest of his life, so he will continue to be a valuable endorser for companies, even after stopping playing. Just as Ilie Năstase endorses Adidas after more than twenty years he has left professional tennis, Federer will promote Wilson for the rest of his life.

Until retirement, Federer is provided by Wilson with rackets, tennis balls, termobags and other tennis accessories. By using these sporting goods in tennis tournaments organized and broadcasted all over the world, the Swiss promotes the image of Wilson worldwide. More than that, Federer is nothing else than an expert in tennis. By choosing Wilson, he communicates his trust in the quality of those products. Thanks to his authority and knowledge in tennis, Federer sends the message to the clients that they too can have confidence in Wilson and buy the company's products. Through Federer, Wilson easier approaches its clients.

On the other hand side, the advantage for the tennis player is that he hasn't got to worry about buying the sporting goods he needs to perform, because Wilson provides them free-of-charge. In fact, the price Federer pays in order to be a client of Wilson is the right of image use. He cedes his image to Wilson, who has the right to use it in promotional activities. For example, Wilson asked Federer for information about the quality of the rackets and their handling on the court. Based on these pieces of knowledge, the company developed a line of rackets for children. The rackets were promoted by using Federer's image. This example shows how valuable such a technical sponsoring partnership can be: new, high-quality products are launched, and innovation in sports goods

manufacturing is guaranteed. The distribution and the promotion of the new article is helped by the image of Federer, while the tennis star also improves his brand capital.

Another advantage of being Federer's official provider is that Wilson equipment has the chance to appear in the advertisements of the tennis star, like for example in some Gillette TV-ads, where the Swiss is using his Wilson racket.

Conclusions

Endorsement deals are an important income source for professional tennis players. In 2009, Roger Federer earned about thirty million US-Dollars from tournament prizes and endorsements (www.sportspromedia.com). Endorsements help the athletes gain more money and mostly build them a positive brand image. These two factors have a word to say in pursuing sporting success.

Not only the sporting talent, but also the earnings from endorsement contracts helped Federer to be number one tennis player in the world. The more money a tennis player wins, the better can be his training and practice conditions, if he or his agent know how to correctly manage the finances. The sponsor also wins, because – assuming the sponsor identifies a tennis player with whom he has common values - the athlete offers him visibility to the clients.

Not acting as a team, but as individuals, the most used sponsoring forms by tennis players are technical sponsoring and endorsements. Endorsements will continue to exist in the world of tennis, being a development factor of the „white sport“.

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